

The Battalion Editorial Board

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The following opinions are a consensus of The Battalion opinion staff and senior editors.

Pick a winner

Polls liken elections to horse races

People Tuesday disregarded their better judgment in some cases as they tried to pick a winner in one of the most hotly contested races of the year.

This occurrence, however, is not one of a horse race, but of the New Hampshire primary. And it is a scenario that could come to pass in Texas.

Because the media inundate the public with one poll after another, voters know more about who the frontrunners are than what their ideas are. And with 48 state primaries and caucuses remaining, the country faces the poor prospect of knowing better who the front-runners are than what their ideas are.

But the incessant polling causes more problems than dizzying percentages of how far in front the leader is and what his lead means. The continued repetition skews the vote as many voters try to pick the winner instead of the one with the best ability. One is more likely to vote for a winner than for a candidate with long odds.

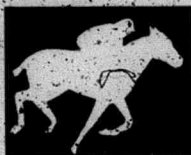
The candidates have done a good job trying to get the specifics of their messages to the voters. The voters have shown they want to concentrate more on the issues.

But the media, after vowing during the 1988 elections to focus more on substance, continue to report the same irrelevant polls.

Yet, the horse race has not ended. The contestants have only rounded the first turn, and they are bearing down on the March 10 Texas primary. That means the state's voters can look forward to another endless stream of reports that tell which candidates win, place and show.

It is up to the voters to make sure polls do not affect their choices. If voters allow the primary to turn into photo finish opportunity because they tried to pick the winner, they do a disservice to the candidates who do not have the big name.

If voters pick an unqualified high-profile candidate, they will be the ones who will lose their shirts.



Held back

Nation suffers from bias against women

Last week a study sponsored by the American Association of University Women issued an ominous warning for the current state of the American school system. As if the fact that thousands of our youngsters are unable to locate the United States on a map is not bad enough, over half of our youngsters are being ignored and even denied opportunities to achieve their full potential.

The study revealed a startling gender gap in educational practices: girls receive less teacher attention than boys.

Girls often suffer from sexual harassment and discrimination in the classroom. Standardized tests and even classroom textbooks display bias toward boys, and girls are frequently subject to negative stereotyping which discourages them from exploring areas such as math and science.

Given that women make up more than 53 percent of the American population, this study should prompt critical

attention to our educational standards and practices. By allowing our young women to slip through the educational cracks, we negate the potential advances and contributions that thousands of educated young women could provide.

The current practices of our teachers and schools, as revealed by this study, do nothing to encourage self-esteem in our young women and put them at a deficit in the competitive job market facing all Americans today.

As America adapts to the changing marketplace, it cannot afford to abandon its women by subjecting them to textbooks and classrooms where Billy is encouraged to build model rockets and cultivate ant farms and Suzie is given Betsy Wetsy dolls.

Someone is losing out in our classrooms today: it isn't just women — it's America.



Something to believe in

Those who stick up for their beliefs deserve our praise, respect

I was walking out of my literature class in Zachry last week, trying to negotiate my way through a maze of recruiting tables. Most were for engineers and business people, but I noticed one table recruiting for a wide variety of people — the CIA. I had some time to kill, so I walked up to the representative and asked him about employment options and the agency in general. After a few minutes, I thanked him and headed for the exit.

As I approached the door, an annoying, nasal voice came from behind me. "Want... so more information on the CIA?"

Sure, I responded. The person handed me a piece of paper. I glanced at it and shoved it into my books.

As I walked into the sunshine, the words I had just read hit me like a maniacal bike rider.

"Do you want to work for a terrorist organization?" the heading read. Of course I don't. Mommy and daddy always told me terrorists were bad people. I pulled the paper out of the jumble. Under the heading were the words, "The CIA is now hiring."

I proceeded to read the "information." It charged the CIA with everything from the Fall of Man in the Garden up until modern day. I'll admit, I was skeptical but also intrigued. I scanned the paper to find out what group had put this stuff together, half expecting to see a tabloid name on it. The only thing I found was a notice at the bottom reading, "Prepared by concerned citizens and students."

So I decided to go find out who these concerned people were; I entered Zachry and searched the area around the CIA booth. The leaflet-guy was lurking in a shadowed corner.

Excuse me, I called to him, you gave me this and I was just wondering what group you're with. "No group, just concerned people." Concerned about what? "Them." He nodded at the CIA table.

Where'd ya'll get this information? "It's in newspapers and magazines anyone can get."

Can you tell me your name or the name of your leaders so I can find out the sources?

He glanced furtively around. "No," he said as he darted into a nearby group of students going to class.

I recall the incident not to say anything bad about the anti-CIA people (not entirely anyway) but because it is so consistent with just about everyone here and around the country.

Allow me to elaborate. Just about everyone is afraid to stand up for what they believe in, if they even know.

Just look around good ol' Texas A&M. There are two basic groups here: the "conservatives" and the "non-conservatives."

The conservatives are those who believe what they do for two reasons. One, they just want to "fit in" with the reputation A&M has. Two, because they are regurgitating what they have heard daddy say around the dinner table for 20 years. These people are characterized by an aversion to change or anything that potentially challenges them.

The others, the non-conservatives, are that group of about 20 people who can be found protesting anything.

They are not so much against something as everything. For them, it is a matter of going against the crowd. As long as their picture is in the paper holding a sign, they're happy. They can be characterized by an argumentative nature and an aversion to anything that potentially challenges them.

Both groups are as bad as the other. Why? Because neither really knows what they believe in. The "conservatives" would be as surprised to learn that they are really reactionaries as the "non-conservatives" that they are publicity-seekers.

Everyone can tell what they don't like or believe in but are hard-pressed to explain what they do.

It's time for both sides to put up or shut up. Take some time to figure out exactly where you stand on an issue — not anyone else. "Why bother?" some may ask. Isn't it easier to just follow the crowd? Sure it is, but more often than not, the crowd runs off a bridge. On the flipside, though, if too much time is spent protesting everything, the protesters wind up with nothing. And no one caring.

The most important thing is to figure out what you believe, then stand up for it. I know I respect people like David Duke, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ann Simonton and Rush Limbaugh. Not so much for what they believe, but because they stand by their beliefs — popular or not.

Don't just say things to fit in or to be different. Say things because you believe them. Once you say them, be willing to support it in public.

I mean, really, if you don't believe in something enough to put your name with it, maybe you don't believe in it as much as you thought.

Sullivan is a senior English major

